

Church at Ephesus

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Revelation 2:1-7
Preached On: Monday, March 21, 2016

Greenwell Springs Baptist Church
19421 Greenwell Springs Road
Greenwell Springs, LA. 70739

Website: <http://www.greenwellsprings.com>
Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers>

I'm glad you enjoy the fellowship as much as I do but tonight we have gathered here tonight for a very special purpose. I know many of you may be here for the first time as a part of Greenwell Springs tonight, as far as what will take place but this is what we know as the Lord's supper, something that we try to participate as a church family about once a month because in 1 Corinthians 11, the Lord said, "Do this as often as you do until he returns." So we're just going to keep doing it until he returns.

But before we have the privilege of knowing what we know as the Lord's supper, tonight we're going to continue our study of the book of Revelation in Revelation 2, verses 1 through 7, we're going to begin with the first of the seven churches. If you were with us last time on Sunday evening, we looked at the seven churches in totality. We looked at the general messages to them, the picture that they gave, the parallel that they gave, but tonight we're going to focus just on this one entity known as the church of Ephesus and I believe that the message that God has through this one specific church could not be more perfect for a time that a church gathers together to participate in what we know as the Lord's supper. So tonight, Revelation 2, beginning in verse 1. It says, "

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith him that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: you have tried those which say they are apostles, and are not, you have found them to be liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Now, before we deal specifically with this one church and the message that the Lord brings to us through it, I want to address what I call a resemblance. The world that the

church of Ephesus was in in the first century is eerily similar to our world today. Please understand that first century Rome and 21st century Western civilization, one of the only differences that we have between the two of us is the technology that is utilized. The passions and the pursuits of humanity are eerily similar. For example, one of the things that was so common in first century Rome was just this overwhelming fascination with entertainment, literally, those that were in charge would suspend work and life for days on end so that they could gather together at the Coliseum for the sport of watching people die. Now, maybe we haven't gotten to that level yet but I think in some respects we're getting close, but in our world today, is there not a fascination with entertainment? We are obsessed with sports. We are obsessed with the entertainment industry. We are obsessed with pleasure and fun and I could go on ad infinitum about this one subject matter but I want to use one very simple litmus test: when you become a culture that pays illiterate athletes millions and school teachers a little over minimum wage, you've got a problem and that's the world that we've become which is eerily similar to the world that they were in too. You say, "Why is this so important?" Because the message to the church of Ephesus is so pointed, I believe, it points directly to us as well.

There was another problem they had is they were incredibly religiously pluralistic. Let me tell you what that means: it wasn't just one religion, it was all religions, and they all had equal footing. We've become that way in our culture today. No one is willing to say what is truth and what is not truth; every faith has its piece of the proverbial pie. We've become a culture that doesn't want to offend anybody unless, of course, it's biblical Christianity. But as a whole, all faiths are welcome, all faiths are to be celebrated, and how dare we make any statement that might appear to be derogatory toward another faith even if it is historically accurate. They were the same way in those days. Remember, it was Caesarea Philippi, that place in Matthew 16 when Jesus took the apostles and said, "Whom do you say that I am?" He stood in the religious hotbed of his culture with all the different faiths being represented around.

You say, "Well, how do we do that in the 21st century?" There's not a whole lot that causes me road rage but I'm about to share with you something that does. It's a bumper stickers that says, "Coexist." Have y'all seen the coexist bumper sticker? The reason it upsets me so much is because they include Christianity with all the other faiths and yet Christianity is distinctly different than all other faiths. Why? Because the one who we are named after isn't dead. The one who we are named after raised from the dead and is alive. So yet it has been thrown just in the mixing bowl with everything else.

That leads to a third resemblance, I call it kind of the pop culture of Christianity. You see, in the day of the church of Ephesus in first century Rome, they had their version of what we know as the mega-church, these large assembly places where typically it was the temple of Diana or other false faiths and religions where people would gather in massive amounts of adoration and popularity. You know, it's interesting today that we're more interested in many circles in allowing for a large crowd than we are for the conviction of the Holy Spirit and what has happened in our world today is very similar to what was happening in first century Rome in the days of Ephesus.

Now, a little more background, the church of Ephesus most likely according to what we know in history, was pastored by the Apostle John. You remember when Jesus was on the cross, one of his seven statements that he made is he turned and he said, "Behold, your mother. Woman, behold your son." Do you remember that famous interaction that Jesus had with the Apostle John, one of the seven statements he made from the cross? History teaches us that who we know as the Apostle John went upward to a place known as Ephesus and I jokingly say was the first pastor of First Baptist Ephesus, that wasn't the name of it but what we know as the church of Ephesus of which the letter the Apostle Paul wrote entitled the letter to the Ephesians and of which this church that is mentioned in Revelation 2 was most likely probably first pastored by the Apostle John.

You say, "Why is that so significant?" Because of all the apostles, this one actually had it together. He was the one that was at the foot of the cross when all the others had departed. He was the one that sat right next to Jesus and was called the beloved. He was the one in the Gospel of John when Jesus said, "What is it to you if one of you here sees with his own eyes the kingdom of God come in power?" The Apostle John had a proximity very close to the person of Jesus. He was called the beloved of all of the apostles and yet it is this church that most likely he actually had a hand in its formation in its early days, and possibly was even the pastor of the congregation.

But as we get into the specificity of this one message, that's the background, that's the history, that the outline information. One of the things that really grabs my attention is the end of verse 1, it says, "to him who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Now, back in chapter 1, verse 20, it said that the golden candlesticks were the churches. This is important to me because it shows me the location of Jesus in proximity to the church. You see, Jesus' location should not be like the church of Laodicea where he is pictured on the outside just trying to get on the inside. According to this, he is walking in the midst. This is critical for us because when we talk about a church, if you don't have Jesus in the mix, you don't have a church, you just have a crowd is what you have. And it says that he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, but it's the statement in verse 2, those first two words of verse 2, that literally sends shivers down my spine, "I know." If nothing else followed that, that would be enough to cause conviction in my life. Have you ever had one of those experiences where someone comes up to you and says, "I just want you to know I know"? What do you know? Do you go into panic mode? I go into panic mode. Sometimes I start inventing things I haven't even ever done just to think maybe I did them because they know about them. When somebody says, "I know," they're stating that nothing is hidden. You know, in Matthew 4, it makes this statement, that every hidden thing will one day in the person of Jesus Christ be made known and revealed. In Hebrews 4:13, it says that in our location as far as our reference to the Lord, that we are literally exposed as if naked, literally meaning that there is nothing that is hidden.

You see, when this begins, the message to the seven churches, the Lord says, "I'm in the midst of you and I know everything." Now, here's the good news, church: if we're living an honest, godly, righteous, transparent life, we've got nothing to be nervous about. But if we're not, we have everything to be nervous about. And when he begins to describe

beginning in verse 2, the things that he knew about the church at Ephesus, most of them are good, one of them is not so good. But isn't it comforting to know that the Lord sees the good that nobody else does? You know, the Bible says at the end of 1 Thessalonians 5 that every man's works, every man's, whether they be good or bad, will be revealed and judged one day, some on this side of judgment and some on the other side. Have you ever had one of those feelings like, "Why doesn't anybody see the good I do?" Don't worry, the Lord does. Have you ever thought, "Well, nobody saw the bad I did." Don't worry, the Lord did.

So when he says, "I know," we don't know tonight how much of what's described to the church of Ephesus that everybody else knew. Remember, according to chapter 1, verse 4, all seven letters probably went to all seven churches so the church at Smyrna may not have known completely what was happening in Thyatira, much less Laodicea and Ephesus, so there's a good idea that what was shared about them was communicated to other churches. It's possible that the other believers didn't know all the great things that were happening at the church of Ephesus because when you're so busy doing the things of God, you don't have time to promote what you're doing, you just keep doing it.

So what we see here is the Lord gives them a recommendation. You say, "What do you mean the Lord gives them a recommendation? Shouldn't this be like a commendation?" No, it's a recommendation. You see, a recommendation is what would you say about this person, what is good about them? The Lord says, "This is what is great about the church of Ephesus." Notice the things that are listed. First, labor. Labor. Literally meaning they do something with their faith. There is an old adage about churches that 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work or 80 percent of the labor. He says, "One of the great things about the church at Ephesus is that the people believe it. They're actually doing it. They are living out their faith. They are not high and holy Christians meaning they just go to the high holy hill on the high holy day and sit on their high holy, you fill in the blank." They actually do something with it. Their labor is great.

But then the next word, it says their patience. Their patience. You do know not to pray for patience, right? Because according to James 1, the only way we receive patience is to go through the fires and the trials of life. Any time you're doing anything for the Lord, trials are going to come. Any time you're active on behalf of the Lord, the enemy is there to desire to trip you up and to stumble you. In fact, if you want to know who's not bothered by the devil are believers who don't do anything for the Lord. That's not who is bothered. I mean, those people aren't bothered. One of the best advice I ever got from anybody in my life years ago, somebody came to me and said, "Jeff, if you don't wake up every day and run face-to-face into the devil, you might be headed the same direction he is." He says, "I commend you. I can recommend you because you labor. You're actually living your faith." What does that produce? If you live your faith out there is going to be trials, there is going to be temptation. But notice that it says, "But your patience," that means that they came out on the other side; they didn't give in; they didn't give out; and they didn't give up.

Ah, but there's another work, so to speak, their endurance. He said, "You have endured the faith." Years ago, there is a man by the last name of Clinton, no relationship to the former president, who wrote a book on the leaders in the Bible, men and women who the Lord utilized in some type of capacity. Some of them seem grand to us, some of them somewhat minuscule but nonetheless they were utilized by the Lord. He discovered in studying almost 1,200 men and women in the Bible that approximately 75 percent of them did not finish strong, that only 25 percent finished strong. That is why 2 Timothy 4 is so rare. When the Apostle Paul says, "I've finished the race." When he says, "I've run my race, there is a crown of life that is stored up for me." It reminds me of a friend of mine years ago, his name is John. John was a pharmacist when he got saved and soon thereafter his salvation, the Lord called him into vocational evangelism. I don't know his exact age but he may be almost Dr. Gene's age and he is still going at it even this day. I remember I had the privilege one time of being in his office in his home, walked in there, it was a small place but it had books everywhere, and I teased him, I said, "John," I said, "have you not been to a bookstore in the last 20 or 30 years?" He said, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "There is nothing on your bookshelf that is new. There is nothing that's been printed in the last couple of years." Do you know what he shared with me? He said, "Jeff," he said, "I don't read people who aren't dead." I said, "Why don't you read people that aren't dead?" And here's what he told me, this was his advice, he said, "I just want to make sure they finished the race." How many times have you experienced this in your life, whether it's the reading of a book or the admiration of a life that all of that admiration and all that support goes by the wayside when something is revealed that you had no information or no idea about? Yet here it says, "Ah, they endured. They hung in there and they finished the race." You get the idea that though the devil wanted to trip them up, wanted them to stumble, they didn't fall for his tricks; they didn't fall for all those shenanigans.

But it wasn't just in works based items, it wasn't just in labor, patience and endurance, there are two very specific beliefs, two very specific convictions that they had that you and I need to heed tonight. The two things that here in Ephesians 2, it says that they tried false apostles. Now, I want you to go back to the first century for a moment. You had the original 11. We know that Judas went by the wayside. We know that in the book of the Acts they cast lots and that Matthias was called to replace Judas and then later the Apostle Paul was called as an apostle out of due time. So beginning roughly about 30 A.D. through the first middle section and toward the end of what we know as the first century, living and breathing, walking among, in fact, even possibly the guest preacher one day of the church of Ephesus could have been Bartholomew. It could've been, we don't know, and yet it says, "You have tried those who claim they were but they are not."

Let me encourage you, church, maybe we need to heed this more in our lives. The Bible says in 1 John 4:1 that we need to test the spirits and see if they are of God. We need to test somebody. I'll tell you right now, don't take my words because I say them, test my words by what Scripture says. Don't say it just because I said it's true. What does the Bible say? It says they tested these men. They said, "Are these really the real deal," because according to the book of Jude verses 3 and 4, it says there were certain man who

crept in unawares for the purpose of destroying and destruction. What were they willing to do? They were willing to say, "Are you really the real thing?"

Do you realize how unpopular that is today? Because today what do we hear from people, "Oh, you can't judge anybody." That's what we hear, right? How many times, I'm going to tell you what I'm sick of hearing, I'm sick of hearing people tell me the Bible says, "Do not judge." You're exactly right. In Matthew 7:1, the Bible says, "Do not judge." But you know that's not the end of the verse, right? It says, "Do not judge lest you be judged for with what judgment you judge shall you also be judged." Then it says, "Do you see a splinter in your brother's eye and not the log that is in your own?" You see, that passage in Matthew 7 has nothing to do with judgment, it has everything to do with hypocrisy. Don't call out somebody for doing the same thing you're doing. Don't call someone out for being a part of the same sin or same mess that you are as well. I think the Bible makes it very clear that we are to utilize Scripture to judge all things, all ministries, and all peoples. Why? Because if it doesn't come in line with what God said, then we don't need to be in line with whomever, whatever, wherever or however.

And the Lord commends them and he says, "You're doing a great job because you're willing to let the Bible be your standard." Today, oftentimes the standard for "Christians" is popular opinion, the number of book sales, the number of people that are in a crowd. That was never the Lord's litmus test. The Lord never said, "The bigger the crowd, the more godly you are." The Lord never said, "The more books you sell, the more important your ministry is." That is never what the Lord said. In fact, what did he say? He said in John 13, he said, "You're my friends if you do whatsoever I tell you to do."

But there's another issue. In fact, this causes some people to struggle because it says here, he says, "but thou hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans," in verse 6. Now, that term "Nicolaitans" or that concept, it's really a compound word. It literally means victory over the laity or victory over the people. You see, in the first century even around the area of what we know as Ephesus, there was a mentality that was starting to creep in and that mentality stated this, that those who were the "clergy," those that were the pastors, those that were the preachers, those that were the Bible teachers, they had all the answers and everybody else didn't have a clue. They were important in the laity. There was a gap that was created so when the Lord says, "I hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans," he made it very clear that he's not a real fan of when we say, "Well, that's his or her or my position but it's not yours." You see, according to 1 Corinthians 3:18 into chapter 4, verse 1 and 2, it says that we all have a ministry and that is beholding or picturing the person of Jesus Christ everywhere we go.

Now, I know Ephesians 4 says he has called some to be pastors and some to be teachers for the perfecting of the saints and for the teaching of the church. I realize that but what's so important here is that the church at Ephesus didn't get caught up in this. You see, we see this oftentimes in areas of belief and faith systems where some people are allowed to have all the answers and other people have to go to those people if they want to get the answers. I've got good news for you, church, if you want to have a conversation with God, you don't have to call me up first. If you want to have a conversation with the Lord,

you don't have to call an elder, you don't have to call a deacon, you don't have to call a staff member, you don't even have to call your best friend. You can go directly to him and the church at Ephesus, they recognized that and they realized that and the Lord recommends them. He says, "This is good. You're laboring, you have patience, you're not giving up, you don't fall for just the latest fads. You adhere to the things that the Scripture has laid out and you understand that it's really about a relationship with Jesus Christ, not about the establishment or an official religion, per se."

But then there's that part of any communication that we all hate to hear. Y'all know what it is, right? It's that word, it's my favorite word in the Bible: but. You see, everything is going good. Wouldn't you love the Lord to say about your life or wouldn't you love the Lord to say about this church what he said about the church at Ephesus so far? Wouldn't you love it if the Lord showed up tonight and said, "Man, your programs, your labor, I mean, y'all are doing great. And even though temptations and trials come, you've hung in there. You haven't given up. You've stayed faithful to the word of God. You understand it's about a relationship, it's not about religion." Wouldn't you love to hear that from him? Here's the problem: but. What does he say? And this is the rebuke: they have lost their first love. They have lost their first love.

You say, "Well, what is their first love? What is it that they've lost?" You know, sometimes you can do all the right things and forget the reason for why you did it. I know there are a lot of different stories out there such as what I'm going to share, but I'm going to share one that I may not have shared with you, it's the story of a young man married to a young bride. They were establishing their home together and they decided that they needed to separate all the duties of such and so one of the things that they established was that this young bride was going to be in charge of paying the bills. That was just one thing she was going to be in charge of. So as they were delegating duties and getting everything situated, she made all the bills out, she put all the checks in. She wasn't doing it electronically like a lot of people do today, and she put them in the envelopes and she stamped them and she gave them to her husband mail. So he just went and he mailed them, he didn't think anything about it. It happened the next month, two or three months, and finally he just said, "Honey," he said, "I want you to know I love you but can I have a conversation with you?" "Sure." "Why is it that you feel it's a necessity that I actually mail them? I don't mind doing it. It's not difficult for me but can you not mail the bills?" To which she said, "Well, that's what my mom always did. She did the bills and then my dad mailed them." He said, "Okay, that's fine." So at the next family gathering, he was talking to his mother-in-law and said, "Is this true?" She said, "Well, absolutely." She said, "I got them all together and my husband took care of them. It was great." I said, "Why did you do it?" You know the answer, right? "Well, that's what my parents did." So finally he gets the opportunity to talk to his wife's grandmother and says, "Did you do this too? Did you get all the bills ready and then your husband mailed it?" "Sure." "Are you aware that your daughter does it and your granddaughter?" She said, "Well, I'm not surprised." He said, "Can I ask you why did you do it?" She said, "Well, I don't know why they do it but my husband was the postmaster."

Again, a simple illustration. There was nothing wrong with the way they were doing it but they had forgotten why they were doing it and here to the church of Ephesus, think about the wonderful things the Lord says: they labor for him; they have patience for him; they are enduring for him; they are standing on the word of God when it's not popular for him; they're saying, "Do you know what? If it's not what God said we are not interested." But I believe when it says they lost their first love, they had forgotten why they did it; they had forgotten the passion, the zeal. What had happened that want to, that need to, that first initial emotion, that first initial drive had gone by the wayside. You know, it's really easy for a relationship to turn into religion, right? It's real easy just to check off boxes. It's real easy just to cross "t's" and dot the "i's." And he says, "What you need to do here is you need to remember" in verse 5, "from where you have fallen, repent, do the first works or else I will come unto you quickly and I will remove your candlestick."

Now, the Lord says you need to remember. You know, I had the privilege of remembering over the last week or two, I know many of you are aware, Tracy and I had the privilege this month of celebrating our 20th anniversary. Let me tell you what we did a lot of, we did a lot of sitting and laughing and crying because we just spent time together remembering the things that we had gone through. Remembering. I'm going to tell you how great it was for our relationship because we got to sit and talk about and discuss and laugh about and cry, some things that we had forgotten had happened in our life that had helped shape our life. And some of the events that seemed like they were a long time ago really don't seem so long ago anymore. In fact, I got this advice from a retired police officer once, he said, "Jeff, I hate to tell you," he said, "life's a lot like toilet paper," he said, "the closer you get to the end, the faster it's going to go." And it's amazing how things have been speeding up in our life. How good it was just to go back and to remember those early days, to remember what it was like before we had diapers in our home; to remember what it was like when we had some aspects; to remember what it was like in this area. And he says what you need to do, "You need to remember where you have fallen."

You see, in just a moment we're going to have the privilege of remembering why we are here tonight. If it were not for the death and resurrection of Jesus, we wouldn't be here tonight. I wouldn't be here tonight. This church would not exist tonight. You see, tonight is a night where we remember and any time we are sitting and we hold those elements in our hands that symbolize the body and symbolizes the blood, hopefully in your life, at least it does in mine, it causes me to think back. You say, "What does it cause you to think back to?" I'm going to tell you what it causes me to think back to, it causes me to think back to the time I got saved and remembering how grateful I am that he was willing to extend his hand of mercy; he was willing to extend his hand of grace. You see, the Lord's supper causes us to remember. What does he tell the church of Ephesus? "You've lost your first love so you need to remember. You need to remember where you have fallen from."

I'm going to ask you an honest question. You don't have to raise your hand. You don't have to give me a nod or an amen, but is there anybody here tonight who would say there used to be a day when I was really excited about the things of God. There used to be a

day when I couldn't wait to read the words of God. There used to be a day where I'd get upset when the alarm went off and I had to get up from praying. Maybe tonight you'd say, "You know, there used to be some real wonderful relationship days with the Lord." Let me ask you, if that's what it used to be like and it's not anymore, what's happened in your life to cause it to change? What has crept up? You know, sometimes those creeping up things are not bad things. There's nothing wrong with family. There's nothing wrong with having a good job. There's nothing wrong with getting a good education. There's nothing wrong with having hobbies. There's nothing wrong with being a good neighbor. The problem is Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added." In fact, if you look at the list of the things the church at Ephesus was doing, they were doing all the right things but they had replaced the first love with them.

He says, "Remember where you have fallen and go back to the way it used to be," because he says, "If you don't go back," he says, "I will remove your candlestick." Now, I don't want to do an incredibly large or elongated doctrinal dissertation tonight but he's not saying they were going to lose their salvation because the candlestick, according to chapter 1, verse 20, was the church. Basically what he was telling the church of Ephesus is, "If you don't change what you're doing, you're going to lose your impact, you're going to lose your influence," and the last time I checked, the building that housed this first century church is now just an historic relic of a piece of property. Why? Because when we don't return, when we don't remember, that's exactly what happens.

He says, "I will come quickly and remove it." You know it doesn't take long. It doesn't take long for the things of God in our life to not have the priority they used to. In fact, I'll tell you how long it takes, probably a few weeks. That's it. Now, there has been a time in my life where I have been very apt to physical exercise and conditioning. Now that hasn't happened in a long time and I know you can tell that and I've told this joke before and I'll tell it again, I suffer from chest to drawer disease, my chest is dropping to my drawers. I know what's happening here. But according to those who know a lot more about physiology than I do, if you work out all the time, when you eat healthy all the time, if you stop being healthy and you stop exercising, it doesn't take long to undo years of work. You know, the same thing happens in our spiritual life. We are faithful to the things of God, we're faithful to the person of God for years and years and years, do you know all it takes is a few weeks; all it takes is a little season of saying, "God, I'm going to put you on the back burner for just a little bit," and pretty soon he's no longer on the back burner, he's not even on the stove anymore.

How many times have I heard this conversation. "Pastor, I don't know what happened. We just kind of stopped going to church and it just never picked back up again." That's not just about church attendance, that happens in our faithfulness to the word of God, our faithfulness to prayer, our faithfulness to sharing our faith, of being a witness, to being salt and light. You see, the warning to the church of Ephesus is very apropos to what we know as the Lord's supper because every time we participate in the supper, it causes us to remember. It reminds us of those early days of our walk with Jesus and hopefully it's nights like tonight that cause us to say, "Do you know what? Something has crept in. It may look good on the outside but something has infiltrated my life that's distracted me

from the Lord being a priority in my life." And tonight's a night of kind of reestablishing priorities.

You know, in just a moment we're going to have a time of invitation like we always do as we prepare for the Lord's supper. In a moment I'm going to pray over us, Brother Jeremy is going to come, I'm going to be at the front because maybe there's somebody here tonight, maybe there's somebody who doesn't have a relationship with Jesus Christ. You see, the Lord's supper is for those who are already forgiven, those who are already saved, and so if you're here tonight saying, "I don't know this Jesus. I don't have that relationship," we want to encourage you, we want to invite you to do so tonight. But I know statistically that the majority of you being here tonight knowing that it was the Lord's supper, statistically the majority of you are already believers. I got that and I don't know what happened in our culture and when I say culture I mean church, something has happened over the last 30 years. You see, when it comes to decision time and invitation time, there's a lot of different decisions that can be made. Obviously there's the decision, what we call a profession of faith or a decision of salvation. A lost person, "I need to be saved. I want to ask Jesus to save me." We get that. A lot of times during an invitation someone says, "Do you know what? I've moved to town or I'm new to town or something has happened in my life, I want to be a part of this local church," and they'll come down and join. Oftentimes somebody is already saved and they say, "Well, I need to be biblically baptized." But, you know, there was a part of the invitation years ago that you don't hear about much anymore. Does anybody remember the days of what we call a recommitment? A recommitment. Somebody says, "What's a recommitment?" You see, a recommitment was a time in somebody's life where they said, "Do you know what? Things have gotten in the way. Things have happened that have just caused to distract me and I just want to refocus right now." It's much like the parable of the sower. Remember the seed that became unfruitful because of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches? And I love the next part, do you know what the Bible says? And other things. You see, the recommitment decision is saying, "Do you know what? I'm probably not where I need to be with the Lord right now or where I used to be but right now it is my desire to go back to the way it used to be in my walk with the Lord."

That's what God was saying to the church of Ephesus. In all the stuff that's great, remember the fact that you have lost your first love. Go back and reignite that fire, that passion. Go back and refocus your energy the way it used to be. Church, I've got great news tonight: you can do that tonight. This is a great time. You don't have to necessarily walk down an aisle. You don't necessarily have to raise a hand and make a public commitment. But maybe deep down inside tonight this is a recommitment night where you say, "The things of this world that have so easily distracted me, I want to recommit to putting the Lord Jesus Christ in the first place, first seat of my life." How do you do that? You've got to remember from whence you've fallen and tonight's the perfect opportunity as we remember what the Lord did for us and on that day in which we realized that we needed to be saved. So as I mentioned, in a moment we're going to have a time of invitation. Maybe you're that person tonight who needs to make a decision. I'll be down here at the front as we prepare.

Let's pray together.